

New Elvises make us see Red

■ The Red Elvises have released two new albums, and both are equally horrible



CD REVIEW

Red Elvises 'Welcome to the Freak Show'

Shoobah-Doobah

★★★★★

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Red Elvises have lied to us. Everyone's favorite band recently released two albums, making us think that we are getting twice the Elvises at the same time. Lies! These musical masquerades are really solo projects of the band's two guitarists that bastardize the Elvises' name.

"Welcome to the Freak Show" is the brainchild of guitarist/lead vocalist Igor Yuzov. On the album he comes out of his musical comfort zone and adds bass, drums and keyboards to his musical repertoire. Yuzov enlists the help of other musicians in his effort, but the rest of the band is nowhere to be found on any of the songs, even though they

appear on the cover, in the liner notes and on the CD itself.

On one hand, I'm outraged, and on the other hand, I'm relieved. The relief comes from the fact that the album is absolutely terrible, and I am glad that it isn't the fault of the whole band. The outrage comes from the sneaky commercial tactics of lending the band title and image to something that is, by any definition, not theirs. But in all fairness, nobody would buy an album titled "Igor Yuzov Goes Solo."

The Red Elvises work because of the chemistry between the four band members. Yuzov is the lead man and provides all the showy bravado. Lead guitarist Zhenya Rock provides the driving rock force and silent mystique. Bassist (or rather balalaika-ist) Oleg Bernov is the crazy ham with red hair. Drummer Avi Sills rounds out the group as the one who looks most like Elvis and isn't from Russia.

Not one of those men can support the entity that is the Red Elvises alone. The other album released at the same time, "Bedroom Boogie," is done entirely by Rock, and though the record company didn't see fit to send us a copy, I can state without a doubt that it is complete crap. Why else wouldn't they send us one?

The only song on "Welcome to the

Freak Show" that is decent, "Sex in Paradise," is a slow rag tune fit to listen to while floating down a river. It's sappy and overdone. Comedic lyrics are what Yuzov does best in the band. But his contributions to the band stand out much more when contrasted against the results of the other members' creative energies. It would seem that the band knows this is the only good song, as it is the only one from the album available for download on their Web site (www.redelvises.com).

Although this deceit leaves a deep scratch on the porcelain ideal to which we hold the Red Elvises, it is a mistake and we must forgive them. They still are the only band that delivers "Kick-Ass Rock'n'Roll from Siberia," and we will need our fix eventually. As if sensing that time drawing near, the Red Elvises will play the WOW Hall on June 3 at 8:30 p.m. While their other albums are much better, none of their studio albums have captured the magic that the band can work on stage. Those who don't know about the Red Elvises would be well advised to reserve judgment until after the show. Those who are familiar with the band should avoid this album just like a Carrot Top movie — it will cause you great pain.

Luck o' the Irish is with Nina Hynes

■ The Dublin singer follows in Bjork's footsteps in the world of electronic alternative rock



CD REVIEW

Nina Hynes 'Creation'

Reverb Records

★★★★★

By Brodie Lewis
for the Emerald

The Irish seem to have a way with it. Just when you thought you might be finally be done with rock music, David Gray's new album makes you doubt all those reasons you had for leaving rock behind. Then U2 released "All That You Can't Leave Behind" and made you forget all about those reasons.

Now, finally being released in the United States, is Nina Hynes' "Creation." Hynes, a Dublin singer who brings with her all the finer points of electronic alternative rock, avoids all of those pitfalls of current rock: no originality, clichéd lyrics and uninspired melodies.

Hynes' new album is a couple of years old in her native Ireland, but it was released just last November in the America. It will no doubt receive a warm welcome from fans of Mazzy Star and Bjork who are tired of the countless knockoffs.

For the last couple of years, rock has seemed to split into two directions. Inspired by the likes of Limp

Bizkit and Korn, there came the branch that focused on repetitive loud guitars and poorly rapped lyrics about hating everything. The other side developed as an endless succession of female pop stars singing catchy little songs about heartbreak, set to a backdrop of calculated melodies. Both branches have become bogged down by predictability, with a lack of real standouts in a field where everything being done has been done already.

One of the things promising to save rock, however, is the infusion of techno-inspired electronic backgrounds. This style was demonstrated most recently by Radiohead and Bjork, the first artists to have true success with this blended formula.

Hynes and her accomplished group of musicians have managed to do a lot with this form. They were no doubt inspired by their Dublin surroundings, where electronic music is all the rage.

The electronic influence is most clearly seen and well-executed on the CD opener "William Tell." The sound is quite European, with murky drums and endless amounts of reverb and echo.

On the next song, "William Tell" is contrasted with the more up front rock of "This Magic Stuff," a pop song that seems destined for the airwaves. As with many of U2's new songs, if it were not for the honesty of the delivery, it would almost be too pop. As is, in both cases, the listener can still seem to avoid feeling guilty when singing along energeti-

cally to such a catchy song.

The music on the rest of the album is layered with electronic riffs and samples floating over the top of guitar and bass and is accented by Hynes' singing, which ranges from soft crooning to passionate near-screams. This voice is no doubt one of the factors keeping Hynes above the obscurity surrounding other female rock singers.

It is strong in a way that instantly recalls some of Bjork's powerful ballads from "Post." Hynes has a way of hitting high notes with such force you feel you might have to turn down the treble on your stereo.

Perhaps the main drawback of the album is its inability to capture her talents on CD. The songs do not fully deliver her capabilities that are evident in a live show. Hynes performed a solo acoustic gig at Cafe Paradiso last Saturday, following on the heels of newcomer Jessica Plotkin. Hynes' show was solid, showing new workings of old songs and performing selections off her next album.

Her next album is titled "Staros" and will be released late this summer. When asked about the fresh batch of songs, Hynes said they relied on more loops and samples, and it represents a departure from her band. Most of the songs just feature Hynes herself, similar to albums by Mazzy Star. Mike Fitzgerald, her friend and manager, added that it was a lot more accessible.

"I'm not sure about accessibility," responded Hynes, "but I prefer it much more."

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